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REMARKS

Claims 1-17 are pending in the application. Claims 5 and 16 have been withdrawn from further consideration because they are directed toward a non-elected invention. Of the remaining claims, claims 1-3, 6-9, 11-12 and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 as being anticipated by Griffith, U.S. Patent No. 2,408,926. Claims 4, 10 and 17 also stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over Griffith in combination with Arnold or Szalony. Claims 13 and 15 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but otherwise contain allowable subject matter. The Applicants have rewritten claim 13 in independent form and, thus, claims 13 and 15 are in a condition for allowance. By the foregoing amendments, the Applicants have also corrected the antecedent basis problems noted at page 2 of Office Action with respect to claims 11 and 14.

All of the remaining claims depend from the only independent claim, claim 1. Thus, the patentability of claim 1, as amended, with respect to the Griffith reference will be addressed herein.

The present invention as embodied in claim 1, provides a differential drive comprising several advantageous features. Specifically, the differential carrier forms journals for rotatably supporting the sideshaft gears, and the sideshaft gears, in turn, are rotatably supported in the drive housing. The claimed arrangement is advantageous in that it provides a differential drive that is lightweight and, at the same time, easy to assemble. These advantages are noted in paragraph [0005] of the specification. In the embodiment claimed, the ease of assembly is improved by providing pre-assembled modules each comprising a sideshaft gear, an outer joint part of the constant velocity joint, and a rolling contact bearing. These pre-assembled modules are insertable into the drive housing. To further improve the compactness of the design, the sideshaft gears are also directly connected to the outer joint parts of the constant velocity joints. As a result, a very compact design is provided with only a few parts which, by way of the pre-assembled modules, permit the differential drive to be easily assembled.

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In contrast, the Griffith reference discloses a differential drive wherein the side gears 31, with their outer ends, are connected to the coupling sleeve 35 by means of a central stud 41. The coupling sleeve 35 is one element of a Hook's-type universal joint. The connections are described with reference to Figure 2 at column 3, lines 47-66. As can be seen in Figure 3, the splined outer ends of the side gears 31 are visible on the left and right hand side of the differential drive. Neither of these side gears are shown or described as being directly connected to a universal joint. Instead, to assemble the device of Griffith, the coupling sleeve is slid on the splined outer ends of the differential drive unit. A central stud engages threads on the outer end of the side gears 31 to retain the coupling sleeve 35 in a splined engagement with the gear by clamping the coupling sleeve 35 against a shoulder 42 on the side gear 31.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that claim 1 and all of the claims which depend therefrom are novel and non-obvious in view of Griffith because the present claims and the prior art differ. Specifically, amended claim 1 differs from the cited prior art in that the sideshaft gears are directly connected to outer joint parts of constant velocity joints. The claimed drive also provides pre-assembled modules each comprising a sideshaft gear, an outer joint part of a constant velocity joint and a rolling contact bearing, which the Griffith reference does not disclose or suggest. These pre-assembled modules are also insertable into the drive housing. The differential drive according to Griffith, alone or in combination with Arnold or Szalony, fails to disclose or suggest any of these claimed features. As such, the Griffith reference does not provide the recited advantages of Applicants' claimed differential drive. The additional connecting mechanisms such as the studs 41 of the Griffith arrangement add weight and bulk to the assembly which is undesirable. In contrast, the claimed drive directly connects the sideshaft gears to the outer joint parts of the constant velocity joints to make the overall assembly lighter and more compact. This arrangement is further provided in a pre-assembled module which further improves the compactness, weight and ease of assembly of the entire differential drive.

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The Applicants therefore submit that the present claims are allowable because the combination of art relied upon does not disclose or suggest at least the following claimed features of Applicants' differential drive:

- (1) the sideshaft gears (18, 19) are directly connected to the outer joint parts (30, 31) of constant velocity joints;
- (2) pre-assembled modules are provided which each comprise a sideshaft gear, an outer joint part of a constant velocity joint, and a rolling contact bearing; and
- (3) the pre-assembled modules are insertable into the drive housing (11).

Accordingly, the novelty and obviousness rejections, which all rely upon the Griffith reference, cannot be supported and should be withdrawn.

Having overcome all of the objections and rejections set forth in the Office Action, the Applicants submit that claims 1-4, 6, 8, 10-15, and 17 are allowable. A Notice of Allowance indicating the same is therefore earnestly solicited. The Examiner is invited to telephone the Applicants' undersigned attorney at (248) 223-9500 if any unresolved matters remain.

Respectfully Submitted,

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